

Frequently Asked Questions about



Is solar electric the same as photovoltaics (PV)?

Yes. A PV system converts sunlight into electricity.

Does the Solarize Montague program also offer discounted pricing for solar hot water systems?

No, there are only discounted prices for PV systems. But, MassCEC also has a rebate program for solar hot water systems (www.masscec.com/solarhotwater).

Do I need to be able to pay upfront for the entire PV system to take advantage of the Solarize Montague program?

No. There are several options for paying for PV:

- No upfront cost lease option: where you get discounted electric rates and the company installs, owns, and maintains the PV system for the life of the contract.

OR

- Purchase the PV system, and you'll be eligible for federal & state tax credits and rebates, with the option to sell Solar Renewable Energy Certificates (SRECs), all of which speed up the payback period for PV.
 - Additional rebate incentives are available for qualifying homeowners if they are putting PV on their primary residence.
 - Financing options are available for purchasing PV.

How long do I have to decide to sign a contract for PV?

To participate in Solarize Montague, contracts must be signed by September 30th. Due to high demand, you should sign up as soon as possible for a free, no obligation site assessment by the installer, to determine if your site is feasible for a PV system.

What are the requirements to participate?

All sites must schedule, or have had, a free Mass Save energy assessment, which is a good idea whether you participate in the program or not. Contact Mass Save at www.MassSave.com or by phone at 866-527-7283. Waiting times are generally very short for a Mass Save assessment during summer months.

- If you want to talk with a local person about an energy assessment and other ways to reduce your bills and PV needs, contact Laura Biddulph the Center for EcoTechnology by phone at 413-586-7350 x229 or by e-mail at Laura.Biddulph@CETonline.org.

Eligible solar PV projects must:

- Be located at residential, commercial, public, or other private sites in one of the five villages of the Town of Montague (Turners Falls, Millers Falls, Lake Pleasant, Montague City and Montague Center).
- Have sufficient solar exposure to participate. The solar contractor can determine this for you.

How does the program offer reduced- cost PV?

Costs are lowered through bulk purchasing and because volunteers do the marketing for the solar installer. Volunteers have a marketing plan already in place that defrays marketing costs to the installer. If enough people contract for PV to hit the trigger points, the price will continue to drop for everyone who participates in the program, so it will be important that we all spread the word and help sign up more people.

How can I find out how much solar power I can get from a rooftop PV system or from a ground-mounted system?

The solar contractor will determine that initially through a site assessment, which uses an online satellite program and other tools.

Are there any other considerations?

If your roof is reaching the end of its life, replacing it before installing a PV system is a good idea. While it is possible to replace a roof that's holding an installed PV system, it will add to the replacement cost. Most PV systems last around 30 years, so take that into account.

<http://www.EnergyStar.gov> has information on Energy Star qualified roofing that can reduce summer cooling needs by 10-15%. Metal and asphalt Energy Star qualified reflective roofing options are available locally. The Cool Roof Rating Council has a cool roof products directory: <http://coolroofs.org>.

PV panels cannot be installed on a slate roof, but you can replace the section of south-facing slate roof where you want to install PV.

You may wish to consider a ground-mounted PV system, though that may add to the cost of the installation. They don't have to be placed right next to your house, but rather can be situated in the sunniest spot on your property.

Will the PV system need batteries?

No batteries are required. Typical PV systems are tied to the electric grid. If you want a battery backup system for power outages, the batteries will be an additional cost.

Are there instances where an installation might cost more?

The basic cost of PV will be the same for everyone, but there are some instances where the total costs are higher.

- Ground mounted systems, electrical service upgrades, or additional structural work are examples requiring additional costs.

If I get PV on my home or office building, will the power stay on if there is a power outage?

Not unless you pay the extra cost for a bank of batteries. Most PV systems these days are tied to the electric grid; when there is a power outage, the PV system automatically shuts off to protect the electric workers from unexpected live wires.

Can the owner of a property in Montague, who lives in another town, put PV on the Montague building through the Solarize program?

Yes, they will be eligible to participate in this program for their property located in Montague.

If my house has a generator, can I install PV?

Yes.

What other ways can I participate in the program?

You can make your home or office more energy efficient:

- Have a Mass Save energy assessment and take advantage of weatherization rebates.
- Tap into Mass Save rebates for energy saving appliances, lighting, refrigerators, freezers, computers, water heaters, pool pumps and more.
- Contact the Center for EcoTechnology for more efficiency resources.
- Explore solar hot water systems, which do not require as much sun as PV.
 - MassCEC offers rebates for residential and commercial solar H₂O systems.

How long does it take a solar PV system to produce the amount of energy that goes into its manufacturing and other energy inputs of its life cycle?

According to the article, *PV Energy ROI*, in Solar Today's June 2012 publication, a PV system in Massachusetts generates the amount of energy that goes into making it and other life cycle energy inputs in 0.9 to 2 years. The energy life-cycle analysis was estimated by the Brookhaven National Laboratory.

Solarize Contact Information:

To get Solarize Montague program updates, find out about events, ask questions, And/or schedule a free site assessment for PV:

Contact the solar installer, Northeast Solar, or the Community Solar Coach from the Solarize Montague website: <http://www.SolarizeMass.com/Montague>

Solarize Montague:

Solarize Montague web page: <http://www.SolarizeMass.com/Montague>

On Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/EnergyCommitteeMontague>

Community Solar Coach: Sally Pick, MontagueEnergyCommittee@gmail.com, 413-559-7257

Mass Clean Energy Center:

Web page about solar: <http://www.MassCEC.com/AboutSolar>

Telephone: 617-315-9306

E-mail: Solarize@masscec.com Twitter: #SolarizeMass

